



Interview with Norm Wright of Cascadia Community College

By: Brayden Dodson

02 March 2010

What are some tips that you would offer to up and coming Running Start students?

- You should want to be in class and want to be challenged.
- Be a self advocate.
- Ask questions! Don't just sit back and hope your question happens to get answered.
- Practice good study habits and note taking.
- Be ready to read and write a lot.
- Be flexible during group work because it is a widely used technique.
- Most importantly, be ready for a culture change. In college students go to class because they want to be in class, not because they are forced to.

What is the most difficult part of transition for Running Start students?

Responsibility is the most difficult part for transitioning students. In high school, the classroom is designed around the student. In saying this I mean that, for the most part, a teacher will do whatever he/she must do to get you through the class with a passing grade. In college the teachers are still there to help you, but won't necessarily go out on a limb to help you learn. The responsibility is now on the student, which means that you have to attend regularly, do the homework, take notes, study, and be respectful to your peers.

What is the best part about the program?

Most would suggest that the free tuition is the greatest benefit to the program, but financial perks aside, the real benefit comes from the college experience. Students have the chance to get away from the immaturities high school and are allowed to do their own thing. Many students enjoy the responsibilities bestowed upon them because it liberates them from strict criteria. In homework especially, students have more freedom in choosing the problems that they feel will help them learn the most.

What are some things to remember about Running Start?

The biggest deal would be to remember the quarterly cycle. Before each quarter the quarterly release form needs to be signed in approval by the designated high school counselor. Then the student needs to register for classes. Following registration, books need to be bought and the fees need to be paid. If a student is going to park on campus, it is recommended to buy a parking permit; otherwise it is three dollars per day to park in the parking garage. Another thing to remember is to be patient. At first it might be frustrating trying to remember all of the details but eventually students get used to the system.

What are some of the perks of attending Cascadia vs. other community colleges?

Cascadia has access to the University of Washington's library program which offers hundreds of thousands of books that other community colleges do not have. The library is a free resource and all a student has to do is pick up a Cascadia ID (this is free) and register the account. Cascadia credits are also easily transferable to the colleges in Washington State which facilitates transfers and applying as freshmen.



02 March 2010

Is college 101 (an intro to college course) necessary?

If someone is looking to get an associate's degree from Cascadia before he/she graduates, college 101 is required before the first 30 credits. If someone is only looking to pick up a few credits here and there, it is not. The class is highly recommended though because it gives you a head start on different aspects of Cascadia such as learning how to operate in group work, signing up for the library, getting the Cascadia card and much more.

How has the Running Start program progressed/ improved?

As far as progression goes, the most recent change lies within the fees. Before the 2009/2010 school year, Running Start students paid nothing, but now with the economy in the slum, students are being charged a small fee of about \$20 per class and extra if it is a lab science class. There is potential that the \$20 fee might be increased up to as much as 1/3 of the tuition costs, but nothing is final in that regard seeing that the bill was never passed. Also, more students are participating in the program than ever before which means in the basic classes such as English 101 etc. students are more likely to be accompanied by fellow Running Start students.

How do Cascadia teachers feel about teaching high school students as well as college students?

It depends on the student but for the most part teachers don't mind as long as the student is respectful. 90% of Running Starts students average a 'C' or higher showing that high school students should not be stereotyped as slackers when they can pull just as much weight as a college student.

Who actually pays the tuition fees? The high school or the school district?

The school district pays for Running Start students with the money that was designated for the enrolled student's high school. The money paid for tuition does not actually cover all of the cost of tuition because the student's high school will usually keep around 7% of the money given to support the student. In the end, the colleges that support Running Start actually lose money on R.S. students.

It is rumored that the UW Bothell campus is trying to take over Cascadia's campus, what will happen to the Running Start program if this does happen?

It was a proposed idea, but there have been no bills for Cascadia students to worry about. If it does somehow get passed, most likely, students will just have to seek out another community college to attend instead of Cascadia. It is true that some colleges such as Washington State University offer the Running Start program, but that is only because of the shortage of community colleges in that area.

Norm Wright

E-mail: nwright@cascadia.edu

Phone: (425) 352 3547